

**SUMMARY OF THE
PROGRAM POLICY AND STRUCTURE COMMITTEE MEETING
OCTOBER 31, 2001**

The Program Policy and Structure Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Wednesday, October 31, 2001 at 11:00 a.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). The meeting was led by its chair, Dr. Kenneth Jackson of the New York State Department of Health. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. The purpose of the meeting was to address the agenda items as follow.

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Jackson called the meeting to order and took attendance.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes from the teleconference held on September 19, 2001 were reviewed. After updating the action items, the minutes were approved as amended.

ANALYTE GROUPS

Dr. Jackson reported that the Proficiency Testing (PT) Committee is in agreement with this Committee that the use of analyte groups does not appear to offer significant advantages over the present system of accreditation and proficiency testing by individual analyte. In order to give this Committee an opportunity to be updated on the PT Committee's discussion and comments concerning analyte groups, Dr. Jackson had invited Barbara Burmeister, Chair of the PT Committee to participate in this teleconference.

Ms. Burmeister reported that in theory, analyte groups seem like a great way to go. The problem, however, is that both the Accrediting Authorities (AA's) and the labs have to track by analyte to make certain that the lab is not repeatedly failing the same analyte. She felt that this point must be stressed to the Conference. A PT sub-committee was formed and subsequently spoke with PT providers, AA's, and labs. That sub-committee looked at feasibility for AA's to track per the 80% testing criteria. As Accrediting Authorities' work loads are already full, this was not met with full acceptance. In addition, their computer systems are set up to track only the pass/fail of each analyte. The PT committee will stress at the Interim Meeting that if a lab fails two out of three PT studies with an analyte group at <80%, they actually lose accreditation for the entire group, not just the analytes they failed.

Ms. Burmeister further stressed that it is the responsibility of the PT committee to inform the Conference of their findings and present the pros and cons of the issue. The PT committee is working to put together a presentation for the Interim Meeting which will show three different perspectives: the labs, the AA's and the PT providers'. As the PT session is schedule to be Thursday morning and Program Policy to follow that afternoon, Ms. Burmeister and Dr. Jackson felt that this can be presented at the PT session and what issues remain can be addressed at the Program Policy

session. It was therefore recommended to put this issue first on the Program Policy agenda for the Interim Meeting.

Art Burton shared his concern for dropping the analyte group concept, as it does provide some relief to the problem analytes. Ms. Burmeister reported that the PT committee has sent a memo to the AA's, labs, and PT providers, asking for their input in identifying analytes with unreasonable acceptance criteria and supporting data. It was recommended that Ms. Burmeister send this memo also to the Program Policy committee.

A huge amount of data is already being generated by PT providers. Ms. Burmeister indicated that in the criteria document where the EPA set numerous regression equations, it was stated that the provider send an electronic file after every study to the EPA, which was to put this data into the database. This is not happening, because the PT database has not been developed. The NELAC Board of Directors, in concurrence with the PT Committee, have written a letter to Henry Longest and to Jim Hanlon of the Office of Water, asking to have some sort of discussion with them before the Interim Meeting. The PT Committee feels that it is of the highest priority that the database be maintained and updated with the information that is being gathered. ACIL would like to see the PT Committee take over the responsibility of setting the acceptance criteria.

It was asked if it has been approved that if you pass 80% of the compounds in the method you get certification for all the targeted compounds in the method. Ms. Burmeister responded that of the language voted in in May, (matrix, technology/method, analyte/analyte group) analyte group needs yet to be jointly determined by Chapter 1 and 2 (if, indeed, analyte groups are to be used). Therefore, the PT Committee has been trying to define analyte group. In the evaluation of defining this, there arose the awareness that there is no real advantage to them. Consequently, at the Interim Meeting this research will be presented and the Conference asked if there is any viability in trying to define analyte group. Ergo, analyte group has to be defined to support the 80% policy, or eliminate the 80% policy and not define analyte group.

FIELDS OF ACCREDITATION TABLES

Dr. Jackson presented his latest Fields of Accreditation--inorganic and miscellaneous table. After some discussion, consensus of the Committee was that the table works well as it is written. Dr. Jackson has removed some things that he felt should go into the extraction digestion of prep methods table, such as several distillation steps. One opinion was that analyte specific prep methods should go with the analyte. Consensus was that distillation should go into the miscellaneous table rather than the prep table. Dr. Jackson will work on the remaining tables and will try to have a full set to present at the next teleconference.

DATA INTEGRITY PROGRAM

Art Burton updated the committee on the status of the work on Data Integrity. Based on previous discussions on the restructuring of the material that will go into Chapter 5, Mr. Burton felt that a good place to insert this material would be Section 5.6. The Committee recommended that Art Burton present, on behalf of ACIL, the proposed language to Quality Systems. The Program Policy and Structure Committee will then endorse and support the proposal. Mr. Burton would now like to contact Quality Systems (QS) Committee to update them regarding this material. He will e-mail

Fred Siegelman, Chair of QS to see if Dr. Siegelman would like to have this presented at the Interim Meeting. Mr. Burton will work with QS in the ensuing months to ultimately get approval at the Annual Meeting. It was recommended to add to Chapter 1.8.3 a policy statement and need for data integrity, and a reference to Chapter 5. Mr. Burton has changed the terms “contract” to “agreement” and “surveillance” to “in-depth monitoring.” Ann Rosecrance recommended that Mr. Burton copy the Committee on his message to Dr. Siegelman and that Dr. Jackson follow up with Dr. Siegelman and verify this Committee’s support of these changes.

INTERIM MEETING AGENDA

Topics suggested for presentation at the Interim Meeting were:

- Analyte Groups
- Data Integrity–Art Burton to give a brief presentation
- Fields of Accreditation Tables
- Open Discussion

FUTURE TELECONFERENCES

The next teleconference is scheduled for November 28, 2001, at 11:00 a.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST).

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m. EST.

**ACTION ITEMS
PROGRAM POLICY AND STRUCTURE COMMITTEE MEETING
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Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Dr. Jackson will work on the remaining Fields of Accreditation tables to present at the next teleconference.	11/28/01
2.	Mr. Burton will e-mail the Data Integrity document to Fred Siegelman, and copy the Committee.	ASAP
3.	Dr. Jackson to follow up with Dr. Siegelman and verify this Committee's support of these changes to Chapter 5.	ASAP

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PROGRAM POLICY AND STRUCTURE COMMITTEE MEETING
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